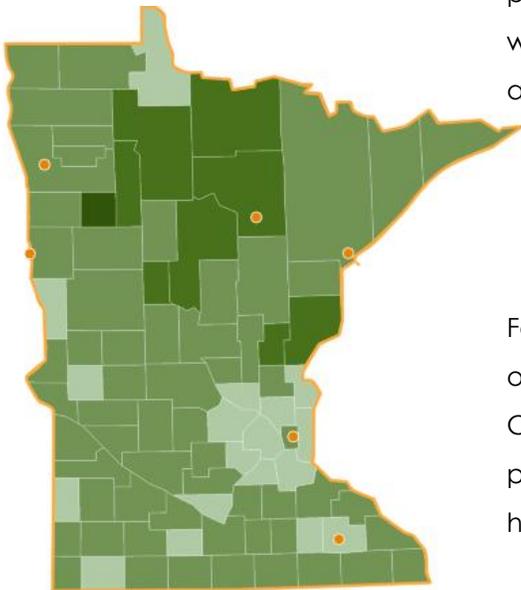
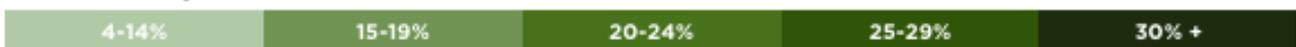


Highlights

- 1 Children in Minnesota are at increased risks for hunger and food insecurity
- 2 Childhood hunger has detrimental effects on children's health, cognitive development, behavior, and academic performance
- 3 Snacks provided to children, either at the end of the school day or in an afterschool program, will address the issue of childhood hunger, while improving a child's ability to focus on homework, be active, or participate in enriching afterschool activities



Food Insecurity Rates



A Call for a Universal Elementary School Snack Program in Minnesota

A Policy Brief

Group 2: So Yun Yi, Cecilia Di Caprio, Megan Radamaker, Sierra Kirby



Why a snack program?

This policy brief proposes the creation of a universal snack program for all elementary schools in the state of Minnesota. The intention is to offer healthy, nutrient dense snacks that are free to all students, and integrated into the current infrastructure of schools. By providing all students with nutritious snacks, this cost-saving policy will improve learning and health outcomes; increase attendance and test scores; reduce food waste; and combat childhood hunger.

The Issue: Food Insecurity and Childhood Hunger

Food insecurity and childhood hunger is an important and ongoing issue in Minnesota that affects 1 in 5 families with children. Children in these families often do not get three meals a day, putting them at severe risk for inadequate food intake and poor health outcomes (Hunger Solutions Minnesota, n.d.).

What happens to hungry kids?



Illness/Fatigue



Malnutrition/Obese



Cognitive Ability↓
Ability to Concentrate↓



Higher Behavioral/Emotional Levels



Headache/stomachache



Academic Issues

Key Definitions:

Food insecurity: The state of being without reliable access to sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food

Hunger: A severe lack of food causing physical discomfort

National School Lunch Program: NSLP is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. At the state level, NSLP is administered by state agencies.

National School Breakfast Program: SBP provides federally subsidized breakfasts to schools and child care facilities in the United States. State education agencies administer the SBP at the state level.

CACFP: Child and Adult Care Food Program provides federal aid to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to wellness, healthy growth, and development. It is federally funded but administered by states.

Kids that are hungry do not have the energy to focus, engage, learn and grow (Child Hunger in America, n.d.). **Hungry kids are sick kids.** A universal elementary school snack program will help to alleviate the burden of hunger-related concerns.

By providing **free, healthy, and nutrient-dense** snacks to all elementary school students, this policy can be an effective method to combat childhood hunger and reduce the prevalence of food insecurity.

This program can also serve as a way to prevent students from consuming unhealthy convenience foods. Students often reach for calorie-dense snacks because of they are cheap and readily available. Providing students with a healthy alternative can help reduce the consumption of unhealthy snack foods.

Benefits of Snacks in Schools and on Childhood Development

As children grow, meeting their nutritional needs is absolutely essential for **healthy development**. Providing snacks between meals can be an effective method to help children meet these needs, considering that a child's stomach is not as big as an adult's (Martinez, et al, 2010).

Although the national school lunch and breakfast programs are great sources of nutrition for students, the amount of time given to students to eat during meals can affect how much nutrition they are actually getting. The School Nutrition Survey found that, nationally, the **typical lunch period is 30 minutes**, with a median of 25 minutes for elementary schools and 30 minutes for middle and high schools. However, this does not represent the actual time students spend eating their meals--usually the full lunch period is for travel time to and from class, as well as time waiting in line. Thus, **students are often unable to fully utilize their entire lunch period**, leaving them hungry throughout the rest of the school day (School Meal Trends & Stats, n.d.).

With the fact that **many students are not getting enough to eat during breakfast and lunch**, a school snack program can help mitigate the effects of hunger due to inadequate intake.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

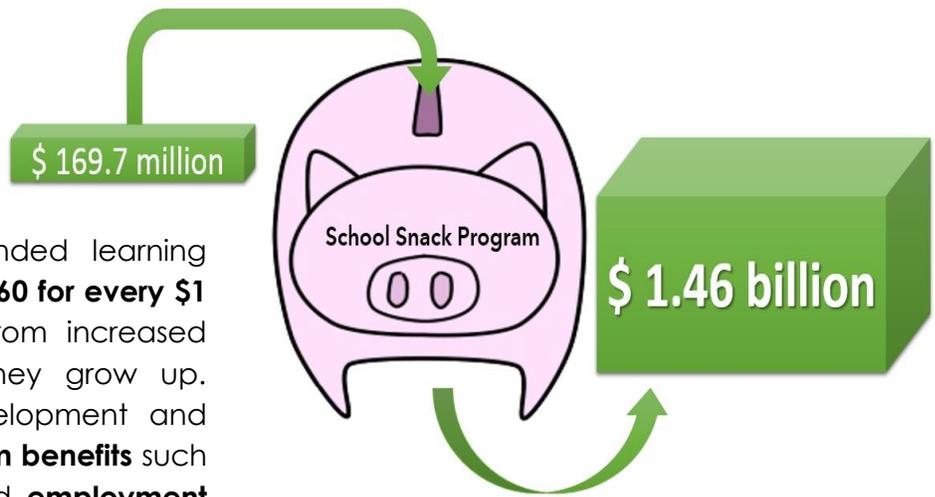
With the widespread issue of hunger, school breakfast has evolved as an initiative to start out each kid's day with a full stomach. We propose that snacks offered to students in the latter part of the day are just as important for them to **do homework, be active, and participant in rewarding after school activities**. With breakfast, educators see a profound change for the better.

In 2016, Minnesota launched the *Minnesota Breakfast Statute*, which required that school districts must offer a school breakfast program in school buildings where at least 33 percent of the school lunches served were at a free or reduced price. The purpose of this program was to provide students with affordable morning nutrition to allow them to learn effectively throughout the day (*124D. 117 Districts to Offer..*, 2016). As a result, educators report that kids **paid better attention in class, had improved attendance, and had fewer disciplinary problems**.

One main argument for this program was that students from low-income households and children with parents who left early in the morning were more likely to utilize free school breakfasts (Angela Hermes, 2012). Similarly, **83% of parents living in concentrated poverty** argue that afterschool programs allow them to keep their jobs and give them peace of mind about their children while they are at work. **1 in 4 children** living in areas of concentrated poverty participate in afterschool programs, so a snack program offered afterschool or towards the end of the day with help to reach these families. Furthermore, **7 out of 10 parents** living in poverty said snack were very important when selecting an afterschool program (Yamashiro, 2016).

All parents want their kids to be healthy and successful, providing nutritious school snacks to their children will enable a healthy and successful present and future.

Economic Benefits



Research suggests that expanded learning initiatives provide a return of **\$8.60 for every \$1** spent—half of which comes from increased earnings by children when they grow up. Investments in childhood development and education can result in **long term benefits** such as **higher earning potential** and **employment** of the participants; **improved health**; and **reduction in anti-poverty spending**, expenditures on **health care**, and **crime**. (*The economics of early childhood investments*, 2014).

A universal elementary school snack program is a necessary investment in childhood development that will **positively affect the economy** and **reduce spending** in the years to come. Investing in childhood nutrition and anti-hunger programs will not only benefit the individual health, but also **improve the economy for all Minnesotans**.

Currently, the federal government subsidizes qualifying **afterschool snack programs** based on the full price, free, and reduced price status of the children participating in the program. These rates are below.

However, some schools still do not have the financial or administrative means to implement a snack program. Therefore, a universal elementary school snack program will require **increased funding** in order to ensure its success and ability to **reach ALL STUDENTS**. In doing this, more students are guaranteed nutritious snacks to help them **grow, thrive, and be successful** and contributing members of the workforce

In 2012, the Afterschool Snack Program cost about \$169.7 million, which is an increase from \$54 million in 2011 (USDA, 2013). Using the above estimates, it can be determined that an **\$169.7 million investment** on an elementary school snack program will **save \$1.46 billion in the long term** through the various benefits to society.



United States Department of Agriculture

SCHOOL PROGRAMS		
MEAL, SNACK AND MILK PAYMENTS TO STATES AND SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITIES		
<i>Expressed in Dollars or Fractions Thereof</i>		
<i>Effective from: July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017</i>		
AFTERSCHOOL SNACKS SERVED IN AFTERSCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS		
CONTIGUOUS STATES	PAID	0.07
	REDUCED PRICE	0.43
	FREE	0.86

Successful Examples and Recommendations

Currently, there is no state that requires all schools within to provide a free snack their students. However, there are numerous successful snack programs administered throughout the country.

1) In Maryland, more than 100 federally funded afterschool snack programs are sponsored by a larger organization called The Family League of Baltimore, which allows these programs to provide healthy afterschool snacks to **7,000 children and teens**. The small afterschool program did not have the administrative capacity or budget to run the program on its own, so it **partnered with a larger organization** to help sponsor the program (*Successful program models*, n.d.).

2) In Georgia, afterschool meals were provided to over **500 low-income high school students** funded by the **Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act**. Ultimately, this afterschool meal program **improved the physical wellbeing** of the students and allowed them to be **more engaged in afterschool programs** without feeling hungry, tired, or sleepy (Doane, 2011).

These successful snack programs were made possible with the assistance of federal funding, and resulted in the **improved child health and engagement in enriching academic opportunities**. However, there has yet to be a snack program that is **free to all students**, regardless of whether or not they participate in an afterschool activity.

Currently, all of the governmentally funded afterschool snack programs, like those funded by the NSLP (National School Lunch Program) and the CACFP, require that students be involved in an afterschool educational and enrichment program. (*The school-based afterschool snack program*, 2013). And although the aforementioned stores are successful, none support children that are unable to stay after school. This allows the problem of childhood hunger and food insecurity to continue to persist.

Based on the aforementioned success stories, attached is a list of recommendations for how to administer an elementary school snack program. It is important to note that while this proposal calls for the funding of a universal elementary school snack program, each school will need to customize it for themselves. Each school should consider their own **student population; financial, administrative,** and

structural means; and **existing meal programs** in order to run a successful and sustainable program. Additionally, schools should consider utilizing existing federal or state frameworks such as with the NSLP and CACFP.

In order to individualize their own elementary school snack program, each school will need to put together a **team of food service staff, school administrators, janitorial staff, busing companies, parents, and student representatives**. This will ensure a successful program designed to fit the unique needs of all Minnesotan students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Grab and Go snack cart available to students at the end of the day
- Snack break towards the end of the school day
 - Some schools open up the cafeteria for a "snack time"
- After School cooking class
 - Research shows that this improves foods preferences a knowledge, self-efficacy in cooking skills, behavioral intentions to eat plant foods, and intake of whole grains and vegetables (Liquor et al, 1998).
- Partnerships with businesses, like co-ops or grocery stores, to provide healthy snacks
 - Can be a cost effective alternative
- Partnerships with non-profits
- Educational and enrichment programs for athletes
 - Allows athletes to participate in the federally funded Afterschool Meal/Snack Program
- Use leftovers from lunch or breakfast for snacks
 - Can help reduce waste and ensures food items that already meet state nutritional requirements
- Backpack program
 - Will provide food to students and their families, regardless of whether or not the child participates in an afterschool program

Conclusions and Next Steps

Hunger and food insecurity among children is a growing problem in the state of Minnesota. Too many students are suffering from poor health, academic, and social outcomes due to inadequate food intake. One important solution to this problem is a **UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM** that will provide healthy, nutrient-dense snacks to all students. But reducing incidences of hunger and food insecurity, this program will also deter students from consuming unhealthy, cheap, and convenient snacks.

A universal snack program that offers nutritious snacks free to all elementary school students will result in **improved learning and health outcomes, attendance, test scores; reduce food waste; and combat childhood hunger and obesity.** The proposed universal snack program will cost **\$169.7 million**, but will lead to **billions of dollars saved** in both short and long term benefits—future **earnings and employment** of the participants; **improved health**; and **reduction in anti-poverty spending, expenditures on health care, and crime.**

Future research for this policy should include **evaluating these snack programs** on hunger reduction, long-term health effects, academic achievement, and economic cost effectiveness. There is evidence from

other snack programs that show how beneficial this program will be, however long term data is needed to fully evaluate its' effectiveness.

To push this policy forward we propose the formation a **coalition of parents, community members, food service staff, teachers, legislators, and anti-hunger advocates** to bring attention to this program. It is also imperative to find **legislative allies** to turn this proposal into a **statewide policy.** **Working groups** of **experts** and **food service staff** will also help to think through **state/site-specific implementation** strategies.

By funding this **UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM**, Minnesota can demonstrate its' **commitment** to ensuring that **all students**, regardless of income, are healthy and **equipped to succeed.**



IT IS EASIER
TO BUILD
STRONG
CHILDREN
THAN TO
REPAIR
BROKEN MEN.

~ Frederick Douglass

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